

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CA

SUBJECT: PROVINCIAL PREMIER REACTIONS TO AUG 18-19 PREMIERS

CONFERENCE

REF: OTTAWA 07511

1. THE FOLLOWING ARE SALIENT POINTS FROM DISCUSSION WITH SOURCES IN MANITOBA AND SASKATCHEWAN PREMIERS OFFICES (PREMIER SCHREYER AND PREMIER BLAKENEY, RESPECTIVELY).

2. BOTH SOURCES WERE DISAPPOINTED OVER MEDIA COVERAGE OF FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE, PARTICULARLY OF PROMINENCE GIVEN TO REJECTION OF LEVESQUE'S BILATERAL EDUCATION LANGUAGE PROPOSAL AND LACK OF ATTENTION GIVEN TO ECONOMIC DISCUSSIONS.

3. LANGUAGE:

-- A. SOURCE IN SCHREYER'S OFFICE BELIEVED LEVESQUE'S PROPOSAL WAS DOOMED TO FAILURE FROM BEGINNING AND LEVESQUE KNEW IT. HOWEVER, THIS WAS NOT VIEWED AS NECESSARILY A POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENT. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON COUNCIL OF EDUCATION MINISTERS REPORT IN SIX MONTHS AND SUCCESS PROVINCES HAVE IN IMPLEMENTING ITS RECOMMENDATIONS. HE HOPES FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL BE WILLING TO FINANCE ANY NEW PROVINCIAL BILINGUAL LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

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-- B. ALTHOUGH PRESS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED BLAKENEY AS FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARDS LEVEQUE'S PROPOSAL, SOURCE STATED THIS WAS NOT TRUE. BLAKENEY WILL NOT SIGN A BILATERAL AGREEMENT WHICH MIGHT ADVERSELY AFFECT RIGHTS OF CANADIANS MOVING FROM SASKATCHEWAN TO ANY OTHER PROVINCE. HE WILL ONLY CONSIDER RECIPROCAL AGREEMENT THAT PROVIDES FOR FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR ALL CANADIANS.

SOURCE INDICATED BLAKENEY DOES NOT HAVE CLEAR IDEA ON WHERE TO GO FROM HERE ON LANGUAGE ISSUE, BUT WILL "PLAY IT AS IT GOES."
HE STRESSED BLAKENEY IS STRONG FEDERALIST ON THIS ISSUE.

4. ECONOMY: BOTH BELIEVE ECONOMY MOST URGENT PROBLEM TODAY AND ALSO MORE IMPORTANT TO CANADIAN UNITY THAN LANGUAGE ISSUE.

-- A. SCHREYER LED DISCUSSION ON ECONOMY AND STRESSED NEED TO RETURN TO COMPETITIVE POSITION VIS-A-VIS U.S. HE FAVORS ORDERLY LIFTING OF WAGE AND PRICE CONTROLS AND ACCELERATED HOUSING CONSTRUCTION. SOURCE SAID HE WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN COMMUNIQUE SENT TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

-- B. BLAKENEY WAS LESS OPTIMISTIC, FINDING NO REAL CONSENSUS AMONG PREMIERS ON ECONOMIC PROPOSALS. SOURCE SAID PREMIERS SPLIT ALONG REGIONAL LINES WITH PRAIRIE PREMIERS FAVORING PHASED END TO CONTROLS AND GREATER PUBLIC SPENDING FOR CONSTRUCTION. BLAKENEY STRONGLY SUPPORTS HALL COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATION FOR ROAD BED RECONSTRUCTION.

5. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO U.S. BOTH PREMIERS DO NOT REPEAT NOT FAVOR INCREASE IN ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY TOLLS FOR CANADIAN CARGOES TO FULL "USER PAY" CONCEPT. BOTH ACKNOWLEDGE NECESSITY FOR SOME INCREASE BUT STRESS SEAWAY IS A CANADIAN NATIONAL ASSET WHICH HELPS UNIFY COUNTRY ECONOMICALLY. SCHREYER BELIEVES IF MORE REVENUE NEEDED, FEES SHOULD BE INCREASED FOR NON-CANADIAN, THAT IS UNCLASSIFIED

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AMERICAN, CARGO. BLAKENEY DOES NOT WANT SEAWAY VIEWED AS A PROFIT MAKING ENTERPRISE.

6. ACCORDING TO SOURCES IN BOTH OFFICES, SPECIFIC U.S.-CANADIAN RELATIONS, INCLUDING PIPELINE, WERE NOT HIGH AGENDA ITEMS (ALTHOUGH BOTH SAW PIPELINE AS AID TO ECONOMY).

7. SOURCE IN SCHREYER OFFICE SAID HE WAS PLEASED CONFERENCE REQUESTED FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO GIVE HIGHER PRIORITY TO HYDRO DEVELOPMENT AS SOURCE OF ENERGY. HYDRO DEVELOPMENT IS ONE OF SCHREYER'S MAJOR INTERESTS.

8. FINALLY, BOTH STRESSED THAT FIRST MINISTERS CONFERENCE IS NOT A DECISION-MAKING BODY, ONLY AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS COMMON PROBLEMS. SCHREYER SOURCE HAILED CONFERENCE AS MOST PRODUCTIVE YET BECAUSE "SPECIFIC PROBLEMS WERE RECOGNIZED AND SOLUTIONS PROPOSED." BLAKENEY, ON THE OTHER HAND, CONSIDERED CONFERENCE TOO FORMAL AND WOULD PREFER A RETURN TO EARLIER INFORMAL MEETINGS.
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